

# SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN KERATON YOGYAKARTA CLASSICAL DANCE STUDIO

Pratita Sarwoadi Dipawijaya\*

Rr Vegasari Adya Ratna\*\*

\* Department of Art Management, Yogyakarta Institute of Arts Indonesia, Jl. Parangtritis Km. 6.5  
Sewon, Yogyakarta, 55188, Indonesia.  
[pratitaitok@gmail.com](mailto:pratitaitok@gmail.com)

\*\* Department of Art Management, Yogyakarta Institute of Arts Indonesia, Jl. Parangtritis Km. 6.5  
Sewon, Yogyakarta, 55188, Indonesia.  
[vegasariadya@gmail.com](mailto:vegasariadya@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

This research explores the social activities in the Sanggar Tari Keraton Yogyakarta. Through interviews and literature study, this research reveals the organized social structure as well as rehearsal and performance activities that strengthen the sustainability of Yogyakarta Style Classical Dance. Collaborations with various art institutions, both local and international, are vital in expanding the cultural impact of this dance studio. Member regeneration programs such as Bedhaya Semang and Among Beksa, as well as the Caos Bakti ritual, affirm the association's commitment to maintaining Javanese dance traditions. Funding support from Dana Keistimewaan ensures the smooth operation of the studio, while the collaboration network is an important pillar in the dissemination and development of traditional arts. Thus, the social activities at the Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio not only reflect cultural diversity, but also illustrate the ongoing efforts in the preservation and development of Indonesia's cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Keraton, Yogyakarta, Activity, Dance, Studio

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## INTRODUCTION

The performing arts of dance are an essential part of a society's life, not only as an independent artistic expression, but also as a form of social and cultural interaction. Dance not only reflects the identity of individuals and their communities but is also a symbol of local values such as tradition, belief, and education. Social interaction (Setiadi et al., 2017) is a dynamic in social relations that involves various relationships between individuals and other individuals, between groups and other groups, or between individuals and groups. Herbert Blumer explained that the process of social interaction occurs when humans act based on the meaning they give to something. This means develops through interactions with other people. Social interaction occurs when there is social contact and communication between two individuals or groups.

Classical dance performances in the style of Yogyakarta have become an inseparable part of the history of dance in Indonesia, with the Sanggar Tari Keraton Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio) at the heart of it. As the "reference" of classical dance in the style of Yogyakarta, this studio is the destination of

many dancers from various backgrounds. More than just a place of learning, the existence of this studio also has symbolic significance as an internationally recognized cultural center. The dance studio in the palace has various functions, including being a place for dancers to develop their skills, make dance their profession with certification, and preserve and teach classical dance for various events.

In addition to its role as a place of learning, the dance studio is also an important center of social activity for its dancers. As social creatures, humans need social interaction for their growth and survival. Through various activities such as training, organization, and cooperation with institutions outside the Keraton Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Palace), the dance studio creates social relationships that support its continued existence. Thus, social activities in and around the dance studio not only strengthen the network of the art community, but also maintain the sustainability of this cultural heritage for future generations.

Research on social activities at the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is also important to provide insight into how activities exist in the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio. Through the activities in this dance studio, there is not only an exchange of skills and

knowledge about traditional dance, but also the creation of a social network among its members. Therefore, the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is not only a place to maintain the continuity of traditional arts, but also a community that strengthens their cultural identity and expands its reach into the wider community.

## METHOD

Qualitative research method is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism which is used to examine objects with natural conditions (real conditions, not set or in experimental conditions) where the researcher is the key instrument. The descriptive approach is a type, design, or research design commonly used to examine natural research objects or in real conditions and not set up as in experiments (Sugiyono, 2015).

### Interviews

Research on Social Activities in the Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio is conducted through interviews and literature review. Interviews with informants will be conducted to obtain data sources. The interview was conducted with Veronica Retnaningsih, an Abdi Dalem of the Yogyakarta Palace who also acts as a dance teacher, choreographer, and dancer in various performances and activities in the Yogyakarta Palace since 1984 until now, and also taught Yogyakarta Classical dance at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, USA for 1 year. The second informant is Putri Elok, an active dancer in Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio, Pujokusuman Dance Studio, Pakualaman Palace Dance Studio, SMKI student and has been dancing for 11 years since kindergarten.

### Literature Reviews

A literature study will also be conducted to add and match existing data in the field with previous research. Literature studies will be taken from accurate sources such as journals, books, and websites related to accurate and reliable research topics that are not opinion writings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Social Structure in Sanggar Tari Keraton Yogyakarta

The Keraton Yogyakarta is a cultural center that not only maintains traditional Javanese heritage, but also manages an organizational structure that supports all activities in it. Abdi Dalem Yogyakarta Palace work and responsible for managing various activities in the Yogyakarta Palace. In carrying out their duties, Abdi Dalem are divided into two groups, the Punakawan and Kaprajan. Abdi Dalem Punakawan comes from the

general public and is in charge of running operational activities in the Palace. They are further divided into two categories: Abdi Dalem Punakawan Tepas and Abdi Dalem Punakawan Caos. Abdi Dalem Punakawan Tepas works like an office employee with fixed working hours, managing the administration, paperwork and finance, while Abdi Dalem Punakawan Caos comes to the Palace once every ten days to show a sign of loyalty and respect as an Abdi. As for Abdi Dalem Keprajan, individuals who come from the TNI, Polri, and Civil Servants (PNS) who are accepted and assigned as Abdi Dalem. Usually, they are people who have retired and then voluntarily devote their time, knowledge, and energy to help the Palace.

In management education, each staff and personnel has a specific position in a well-defined hierarchical structure. Responsibilities and authorities are carefully assigned, allowing each staff member to know who they should report to and who is responsible for each task. This creates a well-structured organization and allows for efficient decision-making. (Anas & Hanani, 2023).

Based on Retnaningsih's statement, the Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio also has an organizational structure under Kawedanan Kridhomardowo, Kawedanan Kridomardhowo acts like the Chief of the Keraton Division which works in the field of Arts and Culture. In the dance studio, it is structured by Pengajeng who acts as a manager or leader. Pengajeng in Keraton Dance Studio has various specializations, such as Pengajeng Kakung Halus, Pengajeng Kakung Gagah, Pengajeng Putri Anak, and Pengajeng Putri Dewasa. This structure also consists of various fields of art, such as Pengajeng Dalang, Karawitan, Niaga, Prajurit, Royal Orchestra Music, and Kagunan Costumes. Pengajeng has the task of overseeing and coordinating the activities in their field, including organizing rehearsals, performances, and managing human resources such as teachers and students. Although Pengajeng are not required to serve full-time like Tepas, they work during rehearsals and when there are special events. The Pengajeng can have other jobs outside the studio, such as civil servants, as their working hours are flexible and adjusted to the needs of rehearsals and events.

Retnaningsih also stated that the recruitment process in the palace is done by affiliation or acquaintance. Kanjeng Pangeran Haryo (KPH) Notonegoro can get recommendations for candidates from Abdi Dalem to manage certain tasks in the Palace. Candidates will meet with KPH Notonegoro and go through a two-year internship process. Assessment during the apprenticeship is based on the craft of "*sowan*" (coming) to the Palace, determination to serve, as well as the candidate's talent and educational background. After being deemed worthy, Abdi Dalem candidates will be appointed through graduation, which is held twice a year,

in the months of Bakta Mulud and Syawal. In addition, the Palace also opened a crew recruitment, specifically for organizing gamelan and music, known as Konco Inggil. This recruitment is open to graduates of Specialized High Schools of Arts (SMKI) who have in-depth knowledge of gamelan and karawitan. SMKI graduates usually work on a project basis, but if they have worked for a long time, they may be offered an Abdi Dalem position with a fixed salary.

### Training and Performance Activities

Yogyakarta Classical Arts Performances usually include dance, music (karawitan), and song (tembang). However, what is most often performed for tourists is the Yogyakarta Style Classical Dance. This performance has been adapted to meet the needs of tourism. Classical Dance Yogyakarta Style was created by Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I, the king of Yogyakarta Palace who ruled from 1755 to 1792. Although it began during the reign of Sultan Hamengku Buwono I, Classical Dance of Yogyakarta Style still exists today (Pradana & Setyastama, 2018).

One major aspect of the activities at the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is the rehearsal and performance programs designed to train and develop dance skills for various age groups, in an effort to preserve this classical dance. One of the main rehearsal programs at Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is Gladen Minggon, which is held every Sunday morning. Gladen Minggon is open to the public, but there are certain requirements that must be met by prospective participants, including the ability to dance Sari Tunggal dances. The participants will be asked by the dance teachers about who brought them to the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio. In preparing for Gladen Minggon, dancers from various studios usually look for dance teachers who can train them in Sari Tunggal dance. This dance is about 25 minutes long, and mastering this dance is an important requirement for those who want to participate in Gladen Minggon at the Palace. Every week, the women's dance training is focused on Sari Tunggal, while Lambang Sari and Srimpi are trained alternately on odd and even weeks. In this Gladen Minggon activity, the Pengrawit also participated in the training by accompanying the dancers. Gladen Minggon for female dancers is held in Bangsal Kasatriyan separated from male dancers who practice in Bangsal Srimanganti.

Jazuli (Jazuli, 2014) states that the expression of symbolism and beauty in art is reflected through creative and appreciative activities. When creating works of art, artists, performers, or creators often draw inspiration from symbolism and aesthetics to express their artistic creativity. In appreciating art, symbolism and beauty help the viewer understand the value and meaning

contained in the work. Art as a cultural expression of society has various functions that vary according to the interests and circumstances of society. The functions of art in society can be divided into four, namely as a means of ceremony, entertainment, spectacle, and as a medium of education.



**Figure 1.** Gladen Minggon Putri at Bangsal Kasatriyan

Aside from Gladen Minggon, there is another rehearsal program known as Among Beksa. This rehearsal is conducted during the day with a limited capacity of 40 participants for female dancers and 20 participants for male dancers. Among Beksa training program aims to produce qualified dancers who will take the competency test after 6 months of training. This competency test is supervised by a team of assessors from the palace and the results are recognized by the National Professional Certification Agency (BNSP) and conducted with international certification. Among Beksa training provides a wide range of dance material for female dancers, including Sari Tunggal, Golek Lambang Sari. Selection for the Among Beksa program is aimed at dancers who are already known within the Palace. The dancers will be tested on their dance skills and then selected by the Pengajeng and Dance Teachers. The Gladen Minggon program has no age limit, while Among Beksa has an age limit, which is a minimum of 13-14 years old (junior high school level) and a maximum of 23 years old. The age limit for Among Beksa is based on the consideration that dancers above the age of 23 tend to be already working or married, so priority is given to young dancers who still have a long career in dance. Among Beksa rehearsals begin in May 2024, marking the Yogyakarta Palace dance studio's ongoing efforts to train and develop young dance talent.

As for the performances in the Keraton, these are usually held on specific occasions such as opening exhibitions, welcoming guests and others. Preparations for such performances can be impromptu, depending on the needs of the event. However, there are also pre-scheduled performances, such as the commemoration of World Dance Day, for which preparations are more structured. For certain performances, such as Catur Sagatra involving four Kingdoms (Pakualaman,

Kasunanan, Mangkunegaran, and Keraton), the Keraton will select dancers who are qualified and practice frequently. The selection of these dancers is done by dance teachers based on their skills and experience.

These findings are in line with the Activity Theory proposed by various scholars, this is a theoretical framework for understanding human practices as complex and interactive systems, originating in Soviet psychology with contributions from figures such as Lev Vygotsky, Alexei Leont'ev, and Yrjö Engeström. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social and cultural context as well as meditative tools and signs in learning. Leont'ev extended Vygotsky's ideas by distinguishing between activities, actions and operations. Activities are the main goal-oriented units of analysis, actions are the concrete steps to achieve goals, and operations are the automatic means of implementing actions. Engeström adds an activity system model with components such as community, rules, and division of labor, as well as the concept of "evolving learning" where the activity system can change over time. (Juneman, 2011).

The main components of Activity Theory are: Subjects, which are individuals or groups that perform activities. The subjects in this Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio are the dancers, dance teachers, pengrawit, and the assessor team. Object, which is the goal or result to be achieved, the object of this activity is the mastery of traditional dance and the development of quality dancers who are recognized nationally and internationally through BNSP certification. In addition, this activity also aims to preserve and develop dance among the younger generation. Tools/Artifacts, which are physical or symbolic resources used to achieve objects, the tools or artifacts used in this activity include gamelan music instruments, dance costumes, practice rooms, and learning materials. Competency certificates recognized by BNSP are also important artifacts in Among Beksa program. Community, which is the group or social environment where the activity takes place, the community involved includes the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio, the Keraton as a cultural institution, and BNSP which provides official recognition.

The division of work in this training program involves dance teachers who teach and guide dancers, dancers who train for competency tests, a team of assessors who assess dancers' competence, and pengrawit who accompany the rehearsal with music. The division of time and rehearsal materials between Gladen Minggon and Among Beksa shows an organized structure. Rules, which are regulations, norms, and conventions that govern activities, include the ability to dance a single sari dance for Gladen Minggon and the age limit for Among Beksa. A regular rehearsal schedule and a clear rehearsal structure ensure the smoothness and

success of dance training activities. The selection process and competency tests for the Among Beksa program indicate the strict standards that must be met by participants.

All of these activities have a system that can form a separate society in the Keraton dance studio where. Society is a unit of human life that interacts according to a certain system of customs, which is bound by a sense of shared identity. According to Koentjaraningrat, to become a society, a group must have four characteristics: interaction between its citizens, customs, norms, laws, and typical rules, time continuity, and a strong sense of identity that binds everyone. (Sari, 2017)

### **Networking and Collaboration**

Collaboration is extremely crucial from a sociological perspective as it adds to relationships, expands social capital, and enhances branding. Meanwhile, from an economic perspective, collaboration is a form of symbiotic mutualism that is mutually beneficial (Mesra & Dolonseda, 2023). One of the collaboration programs conducted by the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is the Indonesian Arts Vocational High School Field Work Program (PKLSMKI), which lasts for three months at the Keraton. During the PKLSMKI program, SMKI 3rd grade students learn various traditional arts at the Keraton, including dance, karawitan, wayang wong, and bedhaya. The program gives students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and skills in traditional Javanese arts directly at the cultural center of the Keraton. Dance and other arts teachers are present daily to teach students, and are given 1 day off per 1 week for three months.

As Retnaningsih stated, the PKLSMKI program is a clear example of collaboration between the palace and art education institutions, aiming to develop a younger generation skilled in traditional arts. Through this program, the Palace contributes to arts education and trains students to become competent and experienced artists. The Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio also organizes regular performances at Srimanganti every Saturday, which are performed by various dance studios. These performances provide an opportunity for local artists to showcase their talents and enrich the cultural life of Yogyakarta. The Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is involved in various other forms of cooperation, including tourism performances every Saturday with other dance studios, and the PKLSMKI program. The palace also sends dance teachers to various arts education institutions, such as the Community Arts Academy (Akademi Seni Komunitas) and institutions in the districts/cities that wish to invite teachers to teach..

Furthermore, the Keraton is also involved in international cooperation by sending one of its dance teachers abroad to Wesleyan University Connecticut in

the United States. This demonstrates the Palace's commitment to expanding the reach of Javanese traditional arts to the global level and introducing Indonesian and Javanese culture to the world. In this program, the teachers will teach for approximately 1 year about their field of expertise such as this time is female dance. On the trip to America, the teachers travel alone and while teaching in America the teachers are not accompanied by other people from the palace or outside the palace.

This collaboration can be explained by collaboration theory, the concept of interdependence emphasizes the importance of cooperation and contribution of each team member in achieving common goals, while shared responsibility encourages active, proactive and responsible participation in the learning process (Zaharatunnisa & Sari, 2023). In this context, the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio not only teaches students in the dance studio but also creates PKLSMKI programs and sends dance teachers to various art education institutions, and not only domestically but also abroad.

### **Networking and Collaboration**

In terms of determining the Privilege Fund (Dana Keistimewaan Yogyakarta) based on UU No. 13/2012, it is determined that the government provides funding for the implementation of Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (DIY) Privilege affairs. The Privilege Fund is discussed and determined by the Government based on the submission of the DIY Regional Government. The Specialty Fund is allocated and managed by the DIY Regional Government, with the allocation and distribution through a transfer mechanism to the regions. The management of the DIY Privileges Fund is allocated by the central government to fund the authority of DIY privileges in accordance with UU No. 13/2012 on Keistimewaan DIY. (Kholik, 2022).

Other than being a cultural center for Javanese traditional dance, the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio is also an institution, of course this will not be separated from the costs to keep this institution running. Funding for social and cultural activities in the Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio comes from the Privilege Fund from the Ministry of Finance, this privilege fund is given to the region to support activities in the Yogyakarta area. Privilege funds are managed by Paniradya, the Governor's Office, and allocated directly to Pakualaman and Keraton Yogyakarta as traditional institutions that apply for funds. In applying for the privilege fund, the Palace has planned the use of funds a year in advance to ensure smooth funding. Privilege funds submitted by the Yogyakarta Palace are allocated to support various cultural activities in dance studios and other cultural fields. The funds are divided into several Kawedanan, or

departments that handle various aspects of culture, including dance.

Funding is managed by the Paniradya, rather than through the House of Representatives (DPR), ensuring a more direct and efficient allocation of funds. This allows the Palace to run its programs more freely and support social and cultural activities more effectively. The funding obtained by the Palace allows the dance studio to hold various programs and performances that enrich the cultural life of Yogyakarta. The rehearsal and performance programs organized by the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio provide opportunities for the local community to learn and enjoy traditional dance arts.

The Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio plays an important role in maintaining the tradition of Javanese dance, particularly through its annual member regeneration programs in Bedhaya Semang and Among Beksa. According to Retnaningsih, prior to the acceptance of new members, a Caos Bekti ritual is performed, a traditional ceremony that involves a pilgrimage to the graves of ancestors in historical locations such as Imogiri, Senopati, and Parangtritis. Member regeneration is a process that allows new dancers to join the dance studio and learn the art of traditional Javanese dance. This program is important to maintain the continuity of dance art and preserve the cultural heritage of the Palace. Member regeneration is conducted annually and involves intensive training for new dancers. For dancers who have successfully joined Bedhaya Semang and Among Beksa, there is an obligation to perform Caos Bekti. This practice involves a pilgrimage to the graves of ancestors to pay their respects and show gratitude for the cultural heritage they have received. Caos Bekti is an important part of the Royal tradition that connects dancers to their cultural roots.

Despite the number of members at the Yogyakarta Palace dance studio increasing every year, there are challenges to be faced in maintaining the quality of training and performances. Previously, those who came to the Palace to learn dance usually already had dance skills and a passion for dance. However, with the increasing number of members, the quality of new dancers in the current era has started to decline compared to the previous generation.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This research aims to explore the social activities that occur in the Keraton Yogyakarta Dance Studio. The study found that the Yogyakarta Palace Traditional Dance Studio has a comprehensive picture of the social structure, rehearsal and performance activities, collaboration networks, as well as regeneration and funding efforts that are at the core of the sustainability of

traditional Javanese dance.

This research reveals a well-organized social structure, rehearsal and performance activities that are the backbone of developing traditional dance, an extensive network of collaborations both at local and international levels, as well as efforts to regenerate members and sustainable funding. The social structure in this dance studio reflects a clear hierarchy. Training programs such as Gladen Minggon and Among Beksa play an important role in developing traditional dance skills among the community, while regular performances and collaborations with local and international arts education institutions expand the reach of Javanese traditional arts. Through member regeneration programs such as Bedhaya Semang and Among Beksa, as well as the Caos Bekti ritual, the Yogyakarta Palace Dance Studio ensures the continuity of Javanese traditional dance. Funding from the Privilege Fund allows Keraton Yogyakarta to run its programs efficiently, while collaboration with various parties is sociologically beneficial.

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